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MASQUERADING FOR TWO.

A COMEDIETTA

In One Act.

By Arthur Gastineau

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MASQUERADING FOR TWO.

——: o :——

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Countess Lelia, *An Italinn Lady.*
Sir Hugh Stanley.

COSTUMES.—For Costumes see Play.

PROPERTIES.

Dressing-room furniture. Toilette table, &c., L. Dressing-glass on table, Long curtains to window, U E.R. Lamps. Chairs. Tooth brush. Address card. Ivory tablet. Two notes.

EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means first entrance right and right. L., first entrance left and left. S.E.R., second entrance right. S.E.L., second entrance left. T.E.R., third entrance right. T.E.L., third entrance left. F.E.R., fourth entrance right. F.E.L., fourth entrance left. U.E.R., upper entrance right. U.E.L., upper entrance left. R.F., right flat. L.F., left flat. R.C., right of centre. L.C., left of centre. C., centre. C.D., centre doors. C.R., centre towards right. C.L., centre towards left. Observing you are supposed to face the audience.

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MASQUERADING FOR TWO.

SCENE.—*A Small Room, serving for Dressing-Room, at the residence of Lady Emily Fielding, London, on the night of a ball. Dressing-table,* L. *Lamps, chairs, etc. Centre doors. Window,* U.E.R.

Enter COUNTESS LELIA, C. *doors, wrapped in opera cloak, and speaking to some one behind the scenes.*

Lelia. You understand, Beppo? Go home for my carriage, and come back with it as quickly as you can. *(Comes down.)* I won't stay any longer at this horrid ball! I can't imagine why Emily will dance on a Friday—a fast-day—the thirteenth of the month, too! These gay people never respect anything—not even a superstition! I should have acted on my presentiments; they never deceive me—and I've had a very strong one. *(Sits.)* About a week ago, in my own house at Rome, I was awakened by Zerlina, my maid, who as usual brought me my chocolate and my English letters. Amongst them was one from dear Lady Emily. Quick, Zerlina, and help me dress, I called out. In her eagerness and hurry she put my left slipper on my right foot. When I called her attention to this evil omen, she insisted that she had made no mistake. I opened my dear Emily's letter, "Come quickly, my dear child; I have found the hero of your dreams! Sir Roger Buford, age twenty-five, handsome, rich, clever, with beautiful teeth and hair, and still preserving the dreams and illusions of youth; he is a real fairy tale hero, and wishes for but two things in this world—to be attaché of the legation at Rome, and

to marry a charming widow! My uncle, the ambassador, has promised me his nomination, but you alone—or I—can give Roger his *second* wish. I love him even to sacrificing myself—but I warn you not to delay, for my devotion is so sublime that it can't last long, and if you hesitate for a moment I shall keep your hero for myself." I set out at once; I arrived in London. Emily kissed me and said, "Roger is delighted. There is to be a dance at my house to-night, where you will see him." I entered the ball-room at ten o'clock, he had not yet arrived; I waited until midnight—and he was the only one in London who was not there. Such an insult to me, Countess Lelia! And here I am waiting for my carriage, which I did not order until two o'clock; to-morrow I shall go back to Italy. Ah, Zerlina, why did you put my left slipper on my right foot?

Enter SIR HUGH STANLEY, *wearing overcoat,* C. *door.*

Lelia. *(Seeing him.)* Ah!

(Puts hood over head, and sits at back of stage.

Hugh. *(Speaking off.)* That's right, thank you. *(Seeing* LELIA, *bows.)* Madame!

Lelia. *(Aside.)* Luckily I don't know this young man.

Hugh. Some old dowager, I suppose. *(Goes to toilette table,* L., *searching.)* No, not one! *(Leaves his gloves on table.*

Lelia. *(Aside,* R.) What can he be looking for?

Hugh. It was very wrong of me, certainly, to have shaken hands with Bentley, who has the evil eye, and brings misfortune to all who come near him.

Lelia. *(Aside.)* He seems to be worried about something.

Hugh. The left eye, too! I was particularly anxious to get to the duchess' early this evening, as I hoped to see the ambassador, who, I suppose, must have gone by this time—for these functionaries are always coming and going in a ball-room, fearing the nightly attacks of petitioners! I left the club at ten o'clock, dressed myself, and waited for my barber until half-past eleven. Now I know why bald men are always punctual! While Frederick was curling my hair, I sent for a carriage, but only one could be found—a horrid, old, dirty rattle-trap—which covered me with dust. I fortunately discovered my condition before entering the ball-room.

(Half opens overcoat and looks at clothes.

Lelia. *(Aside, laughing.)* Ha, ha, ha!

Hugh. I asked for a brush, but none of the servants had one. A waiting-maid told me that I should find one in the dressing-room, but I didn't see any there. *(Looking in a drawer.)* Ah, yes—pshaw, a tooth-brush! *(Puts overcoat on a chair—a card falls from pocket.)* I can't go in looking like a street-sweeper! Who can I speak to? I must go and look for some one! *(Exit* C. *door.*

Lelia. *(Laughing.)* Ha, ha, ha! Poor fellow! Now, if I were wickedly inclined, I should go back to the ball-room expressly to

spread this funny little incident. This young man is very nice, and his dilemma amuses me! It has almost made me forget Sir Roger. I'll write and ask Emily what his name is! *(Seeing card which has fallen from* HUGH'S *coat pocket.)* Why, here's a visiting-card which has fallen from his coat-pocket. Now I'll find out who he is! *(Reading.)* "Sir Roger Buford." There, I knew it! My presentiments never deceive me. I think I won't go home! I'll go back to my dear Emily, who will introduce him to me—or—I'll stay here alone with him. *(Taking off opera-cloak.)* I wonder if I look tolerably well! Zerlina is not here to tell me the truth—but I tell it to myself sometimes. *(Looking in glass.)* Lelia, you are simply bewitching this evening.

Re-enter SIR HUGH STANLEY, C. *door.*

Hugh. I'm dusted at last! *(Seeing* LELIA *arranging flowers in her hair at table,* L.—*Aside,* R.) Ah, a lady putting the finishing touches to her towering structure! *(Aloud.)* Pardon my intrusion!

Lelia. Not at all, sir!

Hugh. *(Aside.)* Why, the old dowager has gone! *(Aloud.)* I must have left my gloves here.

Lelia. *(Seeing gloves and hiding them.)* Ah!

Hugh. *(Searching.)* Where are they? Oh, in my overcoat, perhaps! *(Searches.*

Lelia. *(Aside.)* I've got him now tied hand—ungloved—and foot.

Hugh. *(Searching.)* The effect of Bentley's evil eye still on me! I'm sure I had them when I came up stairs.

Lelia. Are you looking for something?

Hugh. Yes, my gloves! Have you seen them by any chance?

Lelia. No, *(smiling)* unless I mistook them for mine.

Hugh. *(Searching.)* I can't possibly enter a ball-room without gloves.

Lelia. Do as I do, and make up your mind not to be bored by this stupid ball.

Hugh. Are you going home so early?

Lelia. It's twelve o'clock.

Hugh. Cinderella's magic hour! Have you the same reason?

Lelia. Who knows!

Hugh. Then, if I should find your slipper, allow me to take it to you to-morrow?

Lelia. A slipper is not as easily lost as a pair of gloves, besides, our maids would not allow us to go to a ball with shoes large enough to drop off. In fact, Cinderella was only a fairy's god-child, while I——

Hugh. You are her god-mother?

Lelia. Perhaps so.

Hugh. Everything must be possible to you, Madame Fairy.

Lelia. Not everything, but all that I wish.

Hugh. Then, will you find my gloves, please?

Lelia. Pshaw, how can you ask me to do so small a favor?

Hugh. But I attach great importance to the finding of my gloves. Give me a proof of your supernatural powers.

Lelia. Why, I've already given you one.

Hugh. By dazzling me with your beauty?

Lelia. No, by making me invisible to your eyes.

Hugh. Invisible? When?

Lelia. Just now, when I was sitting there! You did not deign even to look at me.

Hugh. Why, was that you?

Lelia. I took the form of an old woman, which is always the way we appear for the first time to mortals. Don't you recollect "Perrault's Stories?"

Hugh. Oh, yes, and then the fairy makes a gift.

Lelia. To Prince Charming.

Hugh. Even when the mortal is neither a prince nor charming.

Leila. Very well! Now I want to follow out ancient traditions. Prince Charming had three wishes——

Hugh. That the fairy granted.

Lelia. Yes, to punish him; for the fulfilling of these wishes is only a deception—there being one thing that Prince Charming always forgets to ask for—viz., happiness.

Hugh. I'd begin with that.

Lelia. Are you quite sure? Here is a tablet! *(Gives him her ball tablet.)* Write your three wishes upon this ivory leaf.

Hugh. Immediately?

Lelia. No, no! Reflect well first, and take great care not to deceive yourself.

Hugh. And then will the three wishes be fulfilled?

Lelia. Without an instant's delay. I leave you now to your reflections.

Hugh. What, are you going to disappear?

Lelia. I am going back to the ball to find my sisters, *(aside)* and to tell Emily of my folly. *(Going* C.

Hugh. Let me go with you.

Lelia. *(Turns.)* No! I command you to stay where you are.

Hugh. Please!

Lelia. *(Pointing to* Hugh's *hands with her fan.)* I dare you to follow me.

Hugh. Oh, I forgot!

Lelia. A fairy can never be disobeyed. Good-bye for the present, beautiful Prince Charming. *(Exit, laughing,* C. *door.*

Hugh. *(Following.)* Madame! *(Returning.)* Where can I find a pair of gloves? Every shop is closed. Suppose I wait for some polite guest, and borrow his. Your gloves or your life! No, that would be too ridiculous, particularly if his hand should not happen

to be the size of mine. I might go home and get a pair, but then she is to come back—at least she promised me that she would - and fairies, I believe, always keep their promises. I suspect she'll do something remarkable. Who is she? I'm certain that I never met her before. A fairy? Well, why not? All pretty women are fairies, or have been. Who cares? She is bewitching, clever—well, a little too clever, perhaps, for she airs her wit at my expense. She must be a wicked fairy, for she has put me into such a ridiculous position. I leave the club, put on a dress-coat and white cravat, and all for the sake of staying all the evening in the dressing-room like an overcoat or an opera-cloak. Hallo, talking of opera-cloaks, here's hers. *(Examining it, L. table.)* It's not a very stylish one. Ah, ha, a pocket! Perhaps it would be rather impertinent, but, pshaw, with a fairy!

Re-enter COUNTESS LELIA, C. *door, but seeing* HUGH *examining her cloak, hides behind the window curtains,* U.E.R.

Lelia. *(Aside.)* Why, he's searching my pockets!

Hugh. *(Searching in pocket.)* A pocket-handkerchief! *(Drawing it from pocket.*

Lelia. *(Aside.)* Zerlina's!

Hugh. No name on it! I'll keep it as a remembrance.

Lelia. *(Aside.)* Zerlina will be furious.

Hugh. *(Still searching.)* A note! *(Takes one from pocket.)* If I only dared——

Lelia. *(Aside, anxiously.)* Ah!

Hugh. No, that would be worse that impertinent.

Lelia. *(Aside.)* That's true!

Hugh. So she receives notes, eh? No doubt it's a declaration of love! Ah, after all, fairies are only women! Here was I believing, hoping—hallo, I wonder if I'm getting jealous! Unfortunately, I've got no right to be. I'd give anything in the world to know what is in that note, and it would be so easy to gratify my curiosity! Ah, there are moments in our lives when great moral courage is needed to keep us from doing mean things. *(Puts back note.*

Lelia. *(Aside.)* Oh, I'm so glad!

Hugh. I must think of something else and not let myself get tempted. Jove, I forgot my three wishes! This adventure is too amusing too give up. Let me see, what do I wish? Oh, first my gloves. *(Writes on tablet.*

Lelia. *(Aside.)* I'll give them back to him.

Hugh. They are absolutely indispensable to me, for I must see Lady Emily. I have a most delicate mission to her.

Lelia. *(Aside.)* A delicate mission! Why does he call it a mission?

Hugh. No doubt Lady Emily will give me information about the position I am begging for. Oh, this will be my second wish. *(Writes.)* I wish to be attached to the legation at Rome.

Lelia. *(Aside.)* He never dreams that his wish is already realized.

Hugh. I have no right—but fairies are not like embassadors, they have no responsibilities. Now for my third wish! That bothers me! What can I ask? *(Reflects.*

Lelia. *(Comes from behind window curtains,* U.E.R.) Well, beautiful Prince Charming, what are you thinking of?

Hugh. (L.) Being a fairy you ought to know.

Lelia. I *do* know!

Hugh. What nonsense!

Lelia. You still doubt my power? Take care, or I will punish you.

Hugh. By disappearing?

Lelia. No, by telling you all that you have been doing while I was away.

Hugh. That's impossible!

Lelia. Listen to me! After I had gone, you wondered who I was.

Hugh. There's nothing very strange in that.

Lelia. Then, not being able to solve the question, you felt tempted to inquire of my confidant.

Hugh. Your confidante?

Lelia. Yes, my duenna, whom I had changed into an opera-cloak.

Hugh. What, you?

Lelia. You see that she still kept her old age, but the transformation had taken the power of speech from her, and as she could not answer you, you were determined to find out whether my pocket-handkerchief was more talkative.

Hugh. How could you know?

Lelia. Pocket-handkerchiefs are imprudent. They are pocket-alphabets; so with one stroke of my wand I made my initials disappear; but the handkerchief, a wicked magician whom I had condemned to keep that form, slipped a note into my pocket out of revenge.

Hugh. I swear to you that I did not read it.

Lelia. You needn't swear, for I know all about it. Your forbearance deserves a reward, so I will let you read it.

Hugh. Oh, no, no!

Lelia. Not when I give you permission?

Hugh. But——

Lelia. What's the use of trying to deceive me? You are crazy to know the contents of that note; so read it, I command you. Come, obey me.

Hugh. Since you exact it! *(Takes note—hesitates to open it.*

Lelia. You hesitate! What are *you* afraid of?

Hugh. I'm afraid that this paper is a Pandora's box, and that all sorts of troubles will come out of it.

Lelia. Read it, I tell you.

Hugh. *(Reads.)* "My dear"—ah!

Lelia. Go on, go on.

Hugh. *(Reading.)* "Our protégé has been made attaché to the legation at Rome, and the news will appear in the official gazette to-morrow." Ah, I was afraid of some great misfortune! So this place of attaché has been given——

Lelia. To you.

Hugh. What, madame, to me?

Lelia. Was not that one of your wishes?

Hugh. Yes, the second; but——

Lelia. *(Giving him gloves.)* Here is your first.

Hugh. My gloves! How could you have guessed?

Lelia. The most trifling things are always anxiously desired.

Hugh. Important things are kept till the last. Well, and my third wish?

Lelia. I own that that embarrasses me a little.

Hugh. No wonder, for I had not decided on one; but now I shall no longer hesitate. *(Writes.*

Lelia. *(Aside.)* His eyes betray what he is writing.

Hugh. *(Handing her the tablet.)* Here it is.

Lelia. *(Without reading it.)* Remember that this is the last one.

Hugh. But the one that secures my happiness.

Lelia. Happiness! Don't you know how it has been defined? "Happiness is like a ball that, while it rolls, the child most eagerly pursues, but once within his longing grasp he flings again far from him."

Hugh. Yes, the child; but the man holds it fast.

Lelia. Yes, when he is tired of running.

Hugh. No; because he is wiser. Will you grant this wish as well as the others?

Lelia. The power of fairies has its limits.

Hugh. And what are those?

Lelia. The limits of the impossible; and what you wish is precisely the impossible.

Hugh. Then you know my wish?

Lelia. You ask for my hand in marriage.

Hugh. And your heart.

Lelia. Are you sure that fairies have hearts?

Hugh. Yes, for they are good.

Lelia. There are bad fairies, you know.

Hugh. Then those have bad hearts; but every fairy has a hand.

Lelia. Yes; but they can't give it to a simple mortal.

Hugh. Make me immortal then.

Lelia. Nothing easier.

Hugh. What?

Lelia. All you have to do is to publish a book on any subject, so learned that no one can read it. Write as preface praises of the old-

est or youngest son of some one—to whom you must send your book and your card, and you will shortly be——

Hugh. Member of the Royal Society.

Lelia. And immortal.

Hugh. Having always held suicide in great horror, I prefer to live; to live, that I may love you, adore you—for I love you! Yes, I love you with all the strength of my soul. I have only known you an hour, but that has been long enough to fill my heart with love, and now my entire happiness is in you, and you alone.

Lelia. Ah, beautiful Prince Charming, you are very susceptible! Straw fires do not last.

Hugh. I swear to you that my love will endure with my life, and you who have the power to read our hearts should believe in our sincerity.

Lelia. The heart is such a badly written book.

Hugh. But you have such good eyes!

Lelia. A fairy cannot wed a mortal, I tell you, and as you refuse immortality——

Hugh. Will you consent to give up yours?

Lelia. I will on one condition.

Hugh. What?

Lelia. You know that the power of fairies rests in their wands. *(Showing fan.)* This is mine. If you take it from me, I shall only be a woman.

Hugh. Then give it to me.

Lelia. No, because that would be a voluntary abdication, and consequently a thing to regret; whereas what one is forced to renounce——

Hugh. Is just as much regretted.

Lelia. But is submitted to with resignation. You must find some way of getting my sceptre from me.

Hugh. Well, I can't use violence.

Lelia. No! Violence is the right of strength—a primitive right. Now-a-days no right is acknowledged but the——

Hugh. Legitimate.

Lelia. No; but that of cleverness. You have been attaché for an hour, so prove your diplomatic powers and do something that will oblige me to offer you my fan of my own accord.

Hugh. In spite of yourself?

Lelia. In spite of myself, or nearly so. Every stratagem will be allowed you.

Hugh. But you can guess all my thoughts.

Lelia. I cannot guess stratagems.

Hugh. Do you swear it?

Lelia. Yes, but I shall fight against them.

Hugh. Then I will own myself conquered in advance.

Lelia. Is that your diplomacy?

Hugh. No, it is frankness.

Lelia. Well, never mind; try, and perhaps you will think of one.
Hugh. And if I succeed?
Lelia. The charm will be broken and you will command.
Hugh. *(Aside.)* What shall I do? What means shall I employ? *(Aloud.)* Do you know any children's games?
Lelia. Indeed I do!
Hugh. Well, there's a very simple one, called "The Pigeon Flies." Will you play it?
Lelia. Willingly! *(Aside.)* Poor fellow, I wonder what he is trying to do! *(They sit face to face.*
Hugh. I'll begin—Pigeon flies. (LELIA *raises her hand.)* Cashier flies. *(She hesitates to raise her hand.)* What, you hesitate?
Lelia. No, no! *(Raises hand.*
Hugh. Fairy flies. (LELIA *does not raise hand.)* A forfeit!
Lelia. What, a forfeit?
Hugh. Certainly, and my gloves?
Lelia. Oh, that's right! But I have nothing I can give you as a forfeit.
Hugh. Yes, you have!
Lelia. No, I haven't.
Hugh. Where's your fan?
Lelia. Oh, no! Take my opera-cloak.
Hugh. Well, then, we'll begin again.
Lelia. Now it's my turn. Pigeon flies. (HUGH *raises hand.)* Heart flies. *(He does not raise hand.)* Are you quite sure that hearts do not fly?
Hugh. Mine doesn't, at least, for you've cut it's wings.
Lelia. But wings grow again.
Hugh. Then they can be cut again.
Lelia. That's true! Lover flies. *(He does not raise hand.)* A forfeit, sir!
Hugh. What, Madame?
Lelia. There's my handkerchief.
Hugh. But I have nothing for a forfeit.
Lelia. You have my handkerchief and your gloves.
Hugh. Here are my gloves.
Lelia. No, keep them. Each forfeit must be redeemed.
Hugh. You must redeem one first.
Lelia. No, sir, you first, as being the most guilty. To redeem your forfeit, I order you to go to the ball.
Hugh. With you?
Lelia. No, all alone, and you must go three times around the room, without saying a word to any one—above all, to Lady Emily—then you must come back here.
Hugh. Ah, to leave you is too heavy a penalty.
Lelia. For you, perhaps, but for me——
Hugh. It is pleasing, eh?
Lelia. I did not say so. Come, sir, obey!

Hugh. What must I do after my three perambulations in the ball-room?

Lelia. You must come and make me redeem my forfeit.

Hugh. But will you really pay the penalty?

Lelia. Why, certainly!

Hugh. Then good-bye for a few moments. *(Aside.)* Now I shall get her fan. *(Exit* C. *door.*

Lelia. *(Laughing.)* Prince Charming is certainly delightful. Lady Emily was right. He is the hero of my imagination. But just now, when I told this little occurrence to Emily, she got very pale. My praise of the baronet seemed disagreeable to her. Poor Emily! Can I have arrived too late? In her place I should have kept a treasure like him to myself. Ah, Emily dear, you look back with regret. Well, so much the worse for you, my love! I shall marry the baronet, and take him to Rome far away from you. I feel sure that he loves me, and I—I must give him my fan, because he never will be able to get it otherwise—and yet I cannot offer it to him. One don't mind being defeated, if the conqueror thinks he has struggled for the victory. Well, I know a way, I think, of giving him this illusion, and that is by going away. Yes, I'll go home, and when he finds out that I have gone, he will ask Lady Emily, and tell her how he loves me. Emily will be furious, and quarrel with him for wounding her vanity—the most lasting sort of a quarrel. Beppo must have come back by this time. *(Goes to* C. *door and calls.)* Beppo!

Re-enter SIR HUGH STANLEY, C. *door, disguised in a servant's hat and coat.*

Lelia. (R.) Oh, here he is! Beppo, give me my opera-cloak. It's cold out, isn't it? Well, never mind, we shall soon be under our own beautiful Italian sky. (HUGH *takes opera-cloak, and as he puts it over her shoulders, she gives him her fan to hold that she may get her arms through the sleeves.)* Here, take my fan.

Hugh. (L., *taking off hat and coat.)* Thank you, madame!

Lelia. *(Recognising him.)* Oh! Mr. Diplomat, you have played your game well.

Hugh. Now, Mrs. Fairy, that I have got your power from you, I order the fulfillment of my third wish.

Lelia. I am obliged to obey—so here is my hand, Sir Roger.

Hugh. Sir Roger?

Lelia. Are you not Sir Roger Buford?

Hugh. Why, no! I'm his friend, Sir Hugh Stanley.

Lelia. *(Laughing.)* Sir Hugh Stanley!

Hugh. Why do you laugh?

Lelia. Because last year I refused to marry you without knowing you.

Hugh. Why, then you are——

Lelia. Countess Lelia.

Hugh. *(Laughs.)* The Countess Lelia?

Lelia. What are you laughing at?

Hugh. Because during the negotiations Roger fell in love with Lady Emily, and begged me to tell her that——

Lelia. Ah, your mission!

Hugh. *(Taking a note from his pocket.)* Oh, then, this nomination as attaché was for him?

Lelia. *(Tearing note.)* Is it necessary to be an attaché to get to Rome?

Hugh. What, do you consent?

Lelia. As I have no wand, I'm obliged to obey.

Hugh. Ah, madame, I will give it back to you—and your forfeit also—since you are going to redeem it.

Lelia. Will it please you?

Hugh. Can you doubt it? Have not the pair of us been masquerading to some purpose? Will not the two be soon joined as one?

Lelia. To be sure—and let us hope that our little masquerading frolic will be but the prelude to a happy wedded life! O-h!

Hugh. What's the matter?

Lelia. To-day is Friday, the thirteenth. How unlucky!

Hugh. (L.C.) No, it's Saturday, the fourteenth!

Lelia. (R.C., *joyfully.*) Oh, that's true! And Zerlina was right; she did not put the left slipper on the right foot.

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